The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba.

TRANSACTIONS Nos. 35 & 37.—SEASON 1888-9.

CONTINUATION OF

HENRY'S JOURNAL,

COVERING

ADVENTURES AND EXPERIENCES IN THE FUR TRADE ON THE RED RIVER, 1799—1801.

BY

CHARLES N. BELL, F.R.G.S.,

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY,

HON. FELLOW ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY; HONORARY CORRESPONDING MEMBER MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCE.

TRANSACTION No. 30.

Lord Selkirk's Deed from the Hudson's Bay Co.

READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY BY

MR. JAMES TAYLOR, RECORDING SECRETARY.

WINNIPEG:

1889.

The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA

Queen's University at Kingston

HENRY'S JOURNAL.

At the meeting of the Scientific and Historical Society March 28th, 1889, President C.N. Bell read a paper on "Henry's Journal, covering adventures and experiences in the fur trade in the Red River country, from 1801 to 1806."

In the library or Parliament at Ottawa there is the manuscript journal of Alexander Henry, a fur trader of the Northwest Fur Company. A year ago I read a paper on Henry's experiences in the Red River country in 1799, 1800 and a part of 1801. As this manuscript has never been printed, its existence is almost unknown to historical students in Canada. So far as the writer is aware, it is practically speaking, the only detailed information extant regarding the history of the Red River country between 1799 and 1809, or in other words, of the years immediately preceding the establishment of the first settlers in the Selkirk colony. The present paper takes up the narration of Henry's experiences, as recorded on the 22nd August, 1801, on his arrival at the Forks, on the site of the present City of Winnipeg, after returning from the annual gathering of the fur traders at Fort William, Lake Superior.

AT THE FORKS.

"Aug. 22nd.—We arrived at the forks of the Assiniboine river and sent on the canoes (to Pembina) and took the horse myself, and two men proceeded by land up the Assiniboine river, three leagues to the grand passage, where we crossed over on our horses, having the water up to our saddles, came on and slept at the passage on the River Salle."

At Pembina Henry found his new fort completed and fifty armed Saulteau Indians awaiting his arrival; the same band that traded with him there during the previous season. "The latter have made several trips to the Assiniboine river and have now a number of horses which they purchased there for guns and medicines; the latter is of their own collection, and consists of different roots and barks, some of which are found on the banks of this river and others are brought from the Fond du lac country and even from the south of Lake Superior." "An Indian arrived with his family in a small canoe in fifteen days from Leech Lake (now in Minnesota) and brings intelligence from that place of several Saulteaux having

MURDERED EACH OTHER

in a drinking match at that place a few days before he left. This caused a terrible uproar in the camp here, the deceased persons being near relations to some here. There were also persons related to the murderers, the former would insist upon retaliating and it was with the greatest trouble that we prevented them by taking all their arms from them. They were all drunk and kept up a most terrible crying, screaming and howling and lamenting he death of their relatives. The liquors tended only to augment the false grief." Scenes like the above were frequent and illustrate the deadly effect of the liquor traffic when the traders' outfits contained large quantities of high wines, which when diluted, was dealt out to the Indians, generally as a free gift.

On Sept. 1st Henry sent off a party of men under John Cameron, to Grand Forks, to establish a trading post. Men with trading goods were also sent to the Hair Hills post.

"Bras Court's daughter (a Saulteau girl) died, aged nine years. Great lamentation, and they must have a keg of liquor to wash away the grief from their hearts, and a fathom of cloth to cover the body, and a quarter pound of vermillion to paint the same."

During the winter of 1800-1 the Northwest Co.'s traders were alone on the Red River, though the Hudson's Bay Co. and the X. Y. Co. had posts on the Assiniboine. In September (1801) Thos. Miller, of the H. B. Co. with eight Orkney men arrived at Pembina from Albany River, Hudson Bay, and established a post on the east side of the Red River in the vicinity of where the town of

EMERSON NOW STANDS.

A few days later Mr. J. Crebossa and ten men of the X. Y. Co. appeared on the scene and established a trading post on the Red River below Henry's Fort Panbian, (Pembina.) "None of them dare build above me for fear of the Sioux coming here." There was a great deal of rivalry between the traders of the different interests during the ensuing season. Learning that the X. Y. Co. people in charge of a Mr. Desford were building at Scratching river, Henry sent down J. B. Desmarais with five men to oppose them in the fur trade.

On the 3rd Oct. Henry notes that he took one and a half bushels of potatoes from his garden patch on the east bank of the Red River, where he had planted some seeds in the spring. Horses had destroyed all the vegetables. On the 10th October Henry went to the Hair Hills (Pembina Mountains) and found that "Langlois had built about three leagues higher up than our house of last winter, exactly at the foot of the steep sandy banks where the river (Pembina) first issues out from the mountains. A few Assiniboines, Crees and Sonnants now begin to come to our house at the mountain to trade." A few days later we are informed that Cournoyer of the X. Y. Co., set off from Pembina for the Hair Hills to build near the N. W. Co.'s house.

3016804

"Neither of my neighbors have a horse, all their transportation is on their men's backs." The H. B. Co. people started to build a post at the "Grand Passage" on the Pembina River.

The better to observe the movements of his rivals in trade Henry had built in his fort a watch tower fronting the door of X. Y. company's fort, placing in it as watchmen St. Germain and Le Dere (or Le Diec.) The houses were whitewashed with a clay found in the Pembina Mountains.

THE FIRST RED RIVER CARTS.

The famous Red River cart now was constructed apparently for the first time, and fortunately we have given us a most interesting description of the original vehicles. "Men now go again for meat with small low carts, the wheels of which are of one solid piece sawed from the ends of trees, whose diameter is three feet. These carriages we find much more convenient and advantageous than to load our horses on the back, and the country being so smooth and level that we can make use of them to go in every direction." It may be as well here to give another entry in the journal made a year later which indicates that improvements had been made in the style of the carts and that they had been advanced to such a form of perfection that little change has since been made. "We require horses to transport the property, of which we have now a sufficient number for all our purposes, and a new sort of cart. They are about four feet high and perfectly straight, the spokes being placed perpendicularly without the least bending outwards, and only four in each wheel. These carts will carry about five pieces, and are drawn by one horse."

During the winter of 1801-2, little of particular interest took place. Stabbing affrays resulting from "drinking matches" were of frequent occurrence. The snow was deep and the cold intense, three of their horses dying from exposure. Tobacco was passing between the Crees, Assiniboines and Saulteaux from Leech Lake, at the head waters of the Mississippi river, to Lake Dauphin, to raise a large war party to raid in the Sioux country during the coming summer. The buildings in the fort at Pembina must have been large in size, as one store house is mentioned as being 100 feet long by 20 wide, built of oak logs.

A FORT BURNED.

In March the trading post of the H. B. Co. at the Grand passage of the Pembina river was burned, with great loss to the traders, though their rivals appear to have been delighted at their neighbors misfortune.

As early as the 28th April, 1802, the H. B. Co.'s people embarked for the Forks. On the 3rd May "arrived four Assiniboines in company with the Saulteaux, the first Assiniboines that came to this fort to trade and drink. They are very suspicious of the Saulteaux and appear always on their guard with their arms in their hands, guns, bows and arrows. The young Saulteaux would fain insult them during their drinking matches, but the men and myself prevented them from receiving any insults." Henry mentions that he set the first sturgeon net used in the river and it required 90 fathoms to reach across as the water was high and the current "forms a great bend" in the net. Garden seeds were sown on the 15th May.

MAKING THE WABANO.

"The Indians, having finished the grand medicine, are now making the Wabano. This ceremony is performed at all seasons of the year, but more particularly in the fall and spring, when they are assembled together in large parties. The ceremony is not of that solemn nature as the grand medicine, and does not require that ceremonious admittance. People of all ages and sexes may be partakers in the outward show of singing and dancing, but it is not every one of them who are acquainted with the mysteries concerning it, such as the different medicines that are required for certain cures, songs, conjurations, tricks, etc."

On the 30th May Henry left Pembina for the annual rendezvous of the North-west traders at Grand Portage, Lake Superior. After transacting the usual business relating to the year's trade and obtaining the supply of goods for his next year's outfit, Henry returned with his canoes to the Red River district, arriving at the Forks on the 4th Sept. He went on horseback

TO PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE,

where he made the following appointments: E. Harrison at Portage la Prairie, L. Dorion at Bear's Head River, J. McDonell at Manitoaubance and Jos. St. Germain at Ft. Dauphin and Prairie en longue. Thence he proceeded to Pembina where the Indians were anxiously awaiting his arrival to taste the "new milk" as they termed the rum. Men were sent up to Turtle river to establish a post and others to the Pinancewaywining; and the Terre Blanche river near Rosseau Lake.

A young man having offered to Henry to work for nothing if he was allowed board and clothing with an Indian woman he was in love with, Henry notes—"This proposal did not surprise me, having seen several of these people as foolish as him and would not hesitate in signing an agreement of perpetual bondage on conditions of our permitting them to have an Indian woman that has struck his fancy."

The winter of 1802-3 passed quietly, nothing of consequence transpiring.

GATHERING RAT TAILS.

In April 1803, "Women gathering rat tails to eat. This root is about the size of

a common pipe stem and from six to ten inches long, and from the same stalk adheres a number of these roots. They grow in pools and marshes of standing water and are of a yellowish color, and are tender and pleasant to the taste. They are edible at all seasons of the year, but more particularly in the spring. They are preferable to the esquibois, and not so hurtful to the constitution."

The men of the Northwest and X. Y. Companies quarrelled and fought during the spring.

A PLURALITY OF WIVES.

"Beaupere was desirous I should take his second daughter, saying one woman was not sufficient for a chief, and that all great men should have a plurality of wives, the more the better, provided they were all of the same family. In this he gave me a striking example in himself as he had three sisters at that time." Henry had evidently taken to himself a wife, though an entry in his journal of two years back points out that he was disinclined to do so.

THE FIRST CAT.

Mention is made of a cat having been taken from Portage la Prairie to the Souris river, and it is probable that the traders had at that early date taken cats into the country to destroy the mice, which committed great havoc with their dry goods, etc., as noted several times in Henry's journal. Gardening was now made quite a feature of the work at the fort. On the 6th June Henry transplanted 500 cabbage plants.

A TRIP TO SUPERIOR.

On the 13th June Henry started for Lake Superior, leaving Langlois with six men in charge of the Pembina fort, all winter posts being abandoned for the summer. The following brigades of boats left the Lake Winnipeg post together for Lake Superior: Athabasca, under Mr. McLain; Fort des Prairies, Mr. McDonnell; Swan River, Mr. McGillis; Upper Red River (Assiniboine), Mr. Cameron; Lake Winnipeg, Mr. McKenzie; Lower Red River, A. Henry. This year the brigades took a new route to Lake Superior, leaving Cross Lake east of Rainy Lake and making for the mouth of the Kaministiquia establishment, while the X. Y. Co.'s people went as usual to the Grand Portage. On the 3rd of July "we arrived at our new establishment of Kaministiquia. The first object that struck us was the two vesse s laying with their sides against the bank, the Invincible and the Otter, who were unloading their cargoes. We found great improvements had been made here for the space of one winter season. Fort, store, shop, etc., built, but not a sufficient number of dwelling houses for all hands. There was only one range erected and that not complete. Here was the mess room and apartments for the agents from Montreal, with a temporary kitchen, etc., adjoining. We were under the necessity of erecting our tents for our dwelling and in them we lodged during our stay here, which seldom exceeds twenty days. Building was going forward very briskly in every corner of the fort, and brick kilns were also erected and turning out great numbers. So that we shall have everything complete and in good order before our arrival here next year. Mr. R. McKenzie was in charge during the absence of the agents."

Sept. 20th.—Henry arrived at the Forks on his return from the new Fort William, and his notes of this date are interesting as descriptive of the wild state of the Winnipeg district at that time.

"I sent the Indians off hunting moose, red deer and bears, of which there are an abundance. I sent a hunter out to the Petite Montagne de Roche (Little Stony Mountain) who returned with the meat of four cow buffalos." After remaining here for a few days Henry "made up an assortment of goods for this place, where I leave Mr. Dorion." And so began the occupation of this site by the Northwest Company.

A SPECIMEN PARTY.

After commenting on the habits of indolence engendered by the use of horses amongst the traders' servants, Henry states that the men who owned horses always took Indian wives, and were led into great extraxagance thereby. He gaves the following amusing description of the departure of some of his men from Pembina to the Hair Hills post: "Let us now take a view of the bustle and noise which attends the present transportation of five pieces (450 pounds weight) to a place where they will find houses already built in 18 1-2. The men were up at break of day and their horses tackled long before sunrise, but they were not in readiness to move before ten o'clock, when I had the curiosity to climb up on the top of my house to examine their motions and observe their order of march.

Aub Payet, guide and second in command, leads off the van with a cart drawn by two horses and loaded with his own private baggage, cassettes, bags, kettles, mashquemowtes (Indian sacks), etc.

Madame Payet follows the cart with a child of one year on her back—very merry.

C. Bottineau, with two horses and a cart loaded with one and a half packs, his own baggage and two young children with kettles and other trash hanging to his cart.

Madame Bottineau, with a young squalling child on her back, and she scolding and tossing it about.

Joseph Dubord, goes on foot with his long pipe stem and calumet in his hand. Madame Dubord follows her husband on foot carrying his tobacco pouch with a broad bead tail.

Aut. Thelliere with a cart and two horses loaded with one and a half packs of goods and Dubord's baggage.

Aut. LaPointe, with another cart and two horses loaded with two pieces of goods and baggage belonging to Brisbois, Jessimin and Poulliotte and a kettle suspended on each side.

Aug. Brisbois follows with only his gun on his shoulder and pipe in his mouth fresh lighted.

Mic. Jessimine goes next same as Brisbois, with gun and pipe, puffing out clouds of smoke.

Mic. Poullotte, the greatest smoker in the Northwest, has nothing but pipe and pouch. Those three fellows having taken their farewell dram and lighted fresh pipes, send forth clouds of smoke and go on brisk and merry, playing numerous pranks.

Dom. Livernois, with a young mare, the property of Langlois, loaded with weeds for smoking, an old Indian worsted bag, Madame's property, and some squashes and potatoes and a small keg of fresh water and two young whelps, howling, etc.

Next goes Livernois' young horse drawing a traville loaded with his own baggage and a large worsted masquemowte belonging to Madame H. Langlois.

Next appeared Madame Cameron's young mare kicking and raving, hauling a traville which was loaded with a bag of flour, some cabbages, turnips, onions and a small keg of water and a large kettle of broth.

M. Langlois, who is master of the band, now comes on leading a horse that draws a traville that is nicely covered with a new painted tent under which is laying his daughter and Mrs. Cameron, extending at full length, and very sick. This covering or canopy has a pretty effect in the caravan and appears at a great distance in the plains.

Madame Langlois now brings up the rear of the human beings following the traville, with a slow step and melancholy air, attending to the wants of her daughter, who notwithstanding her sickness can find no other terms of expressing her gratitude to her parents than by calling them dogs, fools and beasts, etc. Rear guard consists of a long train of dogs, twenty in number. Some bred for sleighs, others for game, and some for pets of no use whatever only to snarl and destroy meat. The total forms a string near a mile long and appears like a large band of Assiniboines."

GATHERING GARDEN STUFF.

In the middle of October the vegetables were taken from the garden and included 300 cabbages, 8 bush. carrots, 16 bush. onions, with turnips, beets, parsnips, etc., and "420 bush. potatoes, the produce of 7 bushels, exclusive of the quantity we have eaten since our arrival here." This was probably the first gardening on a large scale that was ever undertaken on the banks of the Red River.

An account is given of a "bad cough" that attacked the Indians and caused the death of many, which agrees with the records of more modern days when large numbers of the natives are destroyed by whooping cough.

A WIFE AT SIGHT.

It is well known that the traders purchased Indian women by trading horses for them, but the following passage in the journal seems extraordinary: "Livernois has exchanged his mare for a young wife about eighteen years of age. This is a very common circumstance in the Northwest to give a horse for a woman."

Much suffering was endured by the traders at The Forks, Death river and Portage la Prairie, in January 1804, on account of the cold and scarcity of food. When visiting the latter place, Henry refers to Lake Manitoba as follows: "This part of the lake is erroneously called by us Manethowaubane. The southern part is called by the natives the Rush lake, and the Northern is called Manithoaubang." The earliest maps generally refer to it as Meadow lake, or Assiniboine lake, and it is likely that these names were given to the southern and northern parts respectively.

INDIANS FIGHTING.

During the winter the Indians, as usual, were fighting in their camp near the fort. By the 4th of April the Red River was clear of ice, and on the 20th of that month the canoes were laden and the brigade started for Lake Superior. On leaving Lake Winnipeg the N. W. Co., X. Y. Co. and the Swan River Co. (?) mustered a fleet of 33 canoes and 5 bateaux. Quite a large assortment of furs was shipped from Henry's out post at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, where Mr. Dorion had been in charge during the winter. Portage la Prairie post was placed in care of Dorion for the summer. The N. W. company's posts during the winter of 1803-4 in the Red River district were situated at Portage la Prairie, Lake Manitoba, Dead River (Nettly Creek), Portage en Longue, the Forks, Hare Hills, Park River and Pembina.

At Fort William in July Henry writes: "Men not so difficult to hire this year as last, when boaters for the Lower Red River refused 700 Grand Portage currency and Milieux extra equipments."

Arriving again at Pembina September 6th Henry found "men (Saulteaux) all off to war since the 4th." This is the second excursion, the Assiniboines have now joined them and form a party of about 300 men, of which 150 are on horse back. The Crees stole the traders' horses at Pembina Mountain. A large crop of vegetables, including melons, cucumbers, squashes, corn, 500 cabbages and 1,000 bushels of potatoes was raised at Pembina by the men left in charge during the summer months.

In November the traders were fired on by the Indians near Nettly Creek.

BUF LO BURNED.

Nov. 25th—"Plains burnt in every direction. Blind buffalo were seen wandering about every moment. The poor beasts have all their hair singed off to the skin, and even the skin in many places is shrivelled up and burnt in a most terrible manner, their eyes swollen and closed fast. It was really pitiful sight to see them walking about, sometimes running foul of a large stone, at other times tumbling down hill and falling into creeks that were not yet frozen over. In one spot we found a whole herd all lying dead near each other."

The traders of the X. Y. Co. were established on the Salt River and the N. W. Co. had posts in the Red River district at Portage la Prairie, Dog Lake, Prairie en Longue, Dead River, White Mud River of Lake Winnipeg, Hair Hills, Salt River and Paubian.

On the first day of January, 1805, an express arrived at Pembina with information to the traders that the N. W. Co. and the X. Y. Co. had amalgamated their interests, and Henry writes that it was high time as every Indian on the river was a chief and goods were given gratis, except "silver works, strouds and blankets." All the Indians wore scarlet coats, had large kegs and flasks and were very insolent and saucy." It is worth noticing his statement made concerning the red coats, for it was probably by this means that the Indians were educating into holding their ideas concerning the Queen's soldiers being all clad in scarlet. The N. W. Co. sent inland from Fort William in 1805, as that year's outfit of goods, 156 canoes, containing 3,290 "pieces" of goods, each piece weighing 90 ponnds. Accompanying the goods were 1,771 "pieces" containing provisions. This stament gives us some idea of the immense trading business carried on.

THE SUMMER OF 1805.

Henry apparently remained in the Red River district during the summer of 1805, and as the Crees, Assiniboines and Saulteaux gathered at Pembina to form a war party to attack the Sioux, who had killed some Saulteaux at Tongue River, he descended the river to the mouth of the Assiniboine, (Winnipeg), to be out of the way, where he enters in his journal the party "were ten days amusing ourselves fishing and hunting wild fowl, and getting fruit. We caught sturgeons and all other kind of fish peculiar to this river in great abundance. Wild fowl were in plenty about the entrance of the river, and at the Dead River plums were perfectly ripe and the men daily go out and return with loads of that delicious fruit. During our stay here we took a number of excellent whitefish in our small nets. The women gather great quantities of hazel nuts but the mice render it almost impossible to preserve them. Choke cherries, paubians, plums, grapes, wild red cherries, &c., are all in abundance, and delightful amusement for all hands."

Early in October they returned to Pembina and found the Hudson's Bay Co.'s people building and about 80 Indian anxiously awaiting their arrival in expectation of getting as much rum as usual, but in this they were mistaken, for Henry at once drew up an agreement with Mr. Miller, the H. B. Co.'s officer, and divided between them the Indian hunters. With naivete Henry records "taking good care to keep the best hunters for myself, and settled matters so as to keep them in due order and prevent them cheating us, &c." Flattery and threats did not induce the traders to give out liquor without returns. Henry's men found the remains of a Sioux supposed to have been killed by the Saulteaux in a fight. The body was laid out on the open prairie and gaily decorated. The arrival of

SOME FREE HUNTERS

at Pembina is announced in the following words: "X. Y. Freemen from the Assiniboine, the first of the kind ever came to the Paubian River, as great a nuisance according to their capabilities as even their former employers. This quarter has always been free from men of that description, having always made it a settled rule, with myself, never to give a man his freedom in this country on any condition whatever." In November a buffalo walked into the fort through the open gate and was killed by the men. Henry owned what was likely the first library taken into the Red River country and he mentions that it was partially destroyed by fire.

The winter passed quietly until February, when a three days' "drinking match" took place and guns, axes and knives were freely used. Henry sums up the situation in the two words "very disagreeable." In April the workmen had made fifteen carts and one wheelbarrow. The latter article was, in all probability, the first of its kind ever in use in the Red River country. Henry describes the punishment inflicted on a squaw by her husband for

"GADDING ABOUT."

The rascal hamstrung his young wife. On the 14th May three quarts of oats were sown in the garden. Starting the brigade for Fort William in June, Henry returned and left for a trip to the Missouris River, where he encountered the Mandan and Cheyenne Indians. Tho H. B. Co.'s brigade from the Red River had a drum and fife band which "plagued" Henry to a considerable extent.